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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains the writings of international students enrolled in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at Onondaga Community College (New York). The contributed writings were viewed as bridges to understanding among the world's peoples. The collection of essays, poems and short stories includes: (1) "Our Lives in the USA" (Theresa Letkiewicz--Poland); (2) "The New Immigrant Experience" (Alexander Woode--Ghana); (3) "Thoughts from Puerto Rico" (Marisol Carrasquillo--Puerto Rico); (4) "Yao the Orphan, A Hmong Folk Tale" (Dee Lee--Laos); (5) "The Love" (Fareed O. Ibrahim--Congo); (6) "Dreaming Love" (Fareed O. Ibrahim--Congo); (7) "The Mesh" (Alexander Woode--Ghana); (8) "A Significant Moment" (Yaroslav Leshchishin--Ukraine); (9) "Letter to My Coach" (Carmen Mcmahon--Chile); (10) "The Ideal Roommate" (Anonymous 1); (11) "Impressions of a New Arrival" (Anonymous 2); (12) "My Favorite Place" (Igor Bloshkin--Ukraine); (13) "Learning New Things" (Nhon Pham--Vietnam); (14) "My Future" (Nelda Ortiz--Puerto Rico); (15) "Stranger at Home, Excerpt from a Journal Entry" (Elina Petrillo--Uzbek); (16) "How I Got to Typing School" (Osman Ahmed--Ethiopia); (17) "It's Not Fair!" (Jianping Chen--China); (18) "Playing Soccer" (Tan Ho--Vietnam); (19) "The Punic Wars" (Ehab F. Altajialfarouqi--Palestine); (20) "My Fears" (Louiza D'Souza--India); (21) "A Summer Festival in Japan" (Etsuko Kijima--Japan); (22) "My Twin Cousins" (Fei Zheng--China); (23) "Altruistic Behavior in Society Today" (Janna Sereda--Ukraine); (24) "Tiger Hill in Suzhou" (Chaomei Jing--China); (25) "How to Buy a Used Car" (Victor Kuts--Ukraine); and (26) "Amanda, A Characterization from 'The Glass Menagerie'" (Vivian Lee--China). (EH)

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Bridges to Understanding

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Writings by OCC International Students
Spring 1994

Sponsored by
The ESOL Committee
and
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This is a first booklet of the writings of Onondaga Community College students presently enrolled in the special sections of English, Reading and Communications courses for International Students. These courses appear in the master schedule with section numbers 991, 992, etc.

The editors wish to thank all the students who contributed their writings. These are surely bridges to understanding. We share their joy at seeing their works in print. Some pieces were printed whole, while others were shortened only because of space. The ellipsis (...) is used to indicate the omissions.

International Students in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program at OCC come from many countries and have varied first languages. **We have students whose first languages are these:**

Armenian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Malamayam, Laotian, Hmong, Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese, Cantonese, Sowe, Somali, Amharic, Tagalog, Kuku, Arabic, Korean, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, German, Portuguese, French, Macedonian, Gujarati, Kannada, and Kurdish.

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Our Lives in the USA

When my family and I came to the USA three and a half years ago, we thought that we would go back to Poland in a few years. These few years have passed, and we are still here in Syracuse. Although our friends and families are in Poland, our home is not there. We have already found our own place here, and we don't feel like outsiders anymore.

After my husband got a very good job in an engineering company, we could have very good living conditions. We rented a bigger apartment and bought two better cars. Now if we want to visit a restaurant or see a movie, we don't have to count how much money we can spend.

From Americans we have learned the wonderful idea that we live only once, so we should use the time that is given to us. For that reason we have traveled a lot since we understood this important truth. We have seen most of Central New York, New York City, Niagara Falls, Chicago and Disney World.

When we were in Disney World, we could see people's joy. Everybody laughed and wanted to be part of this magic world. I think that the fact that they can enjoy themselves is a wonderful attribute of Americans. I am sure that if Disney World were transferred to Poland, it would be a very different looking place. Poles in general cannot enjoy themselves; they rather prefer to complain about their lives and criticize everything. Fortunately my husband and I have changed; therefore, our lives have been very dynamic and interesting.

That's why being part of a wonderful family wasn't enough for me anymore. I wanted to be a wife whom my husband could be proud of. I wanted to have my own career. As a result, I am back in college for I want to be a teacher in the future. My dream is that when I am fifty and looking back at my life, I will be a very satisfied lady.

I am very glad that we had the opportunity to come to the USA because we have learned more about ourselves and how to be happy.

Theresa Letkiewicz
Poland

The New Immigrant Experience

Even though I had been to most European countries, I had always thought of coming to America because I have read many books of the place, and have seen it on television.

Soon after I graduated from the Polytechnic, my father told me I will be continuing the rest of my schooling in the States. ...words alone fail me if I am to expless how happy I was ... . After a week, I made all the necessary preparation and set off on the journey with my elder brother because he was already here at OCC.

... I came to school ... to do my placement test. One thing which is remarkable about the students here at OCC is that they are very friendly ... the first word which comes out of their mouths is "What's up?"The instructors are very hospitable and are willing to help at anytime. Some of these are Mrs. Bellen and Mrs. Motto.

There was one thing I didn't like about Syracuse. One morning when I woke up for school, the weather was so cold that I found myself freezing at the bus stop. Immediately, all the excitement I had built up in me started fading out. I longed for home. I hadn't seen such cold in my life before. I decided to ring my Daddy to get me out of the place ... . But my brother advised me to wait a little. So I gathered momentum, and I found myself adapting in a week or two.

Alexander Woode
Ghana

Thoughts from Puerto Rico

When comparing American tradition and culture with mine, we are quite different in many things, but also common in half of things. I think that American culture is beautiful like mine. I also know that america has good and bad behaviors. so do we.

I like americans because they are sweet and a friendlier people. America is very good in education. Also it is a good place for me to live with my family. America gives you lots of benefits and opportunities. Just you name it and America has it!

Marisol Carrasquillo
Puerto Rico

Yao the Orphan *
(A Hmong Folk Tale)

Long ago there was a king who had seven daughters. One day he said to them. "Tomorrow you are to get up early, prepare the morning meal, and then go choose husbands for yourselves."

So early the next morning, ... the king brought out a horse wearing a saddle and an ugly old dog with red eyes. (He) ... ordered his daughters ... beginning with the eldest, to leave with the horse and the dog, and go find a husband.

"Go," said the king. "Pack all your belongings and supplies on the horse's back. ... the red eyed dog will guide you. Wherever the dog stops and refuses to leave, there you will settle down and live, even if it is with other dogs or pigs. In whatever house the dog chooses to stay, whether with Laotians, Chinese or Hmong, that is where you are to live; you must marry the owner of the house. Go now! Leave! Follow the red eyed dog!"

... The king commanded each girl in the same way, but they all refused, down to the seventh girl.

"You go my dear daughter," the king told her. "You are the last one. You will have to listen to me. You must go with this horse and dog."

So the youngest daughter, Yer, agreed to go ... and search everywhere for her unknown husband.

Before Yer left, her father spoke to her again. "The red eyed dog is your guide. Wherever he goes, you must go. And where he stops, you must stop. He will lead you to your husband. Now go!"

... She traveled many days. along the way, she saw people building fine houses, painted white. In many places, she saw flooded fields of rice, there water shining brightly. But the dog did not stop there. He kept going every day until nightfall, stopping only to sleep.

So day after day, Yer kept walking. She was sad, and sighed as she spoke to the dog, "My poor old, why don't we stop here where there are beautiful houses and rice fields, and live here, instead of always pushing on?"

But the dog still trotted on and on, until, one day, they finally arrived at Yao's house. Now Yao was an orphan, and very poor. He lived in a miserable thatched hut in absolute poverty. Yao's only possessions were a chicken that had lost its feathers, a pale and scrawny dog, an old cooking pot, a chipped bowl, and a badly worn spoon. Inside the house everything was cluttered and dirty.

When the king's daughter, the horse and the red eyed dog arrived at Yao's, night was falling. They went inside the house to rest, and there they spent the night.

The next morning, after the breakfast provided from Yer's dwindling supplies, Yao said to the young woman, "Dear Sister, if you intend to travel on today, please go now since I have to go work in the fields. I would like to close up the house before I leave." So Yer quickly readied her horse and summoned her dog. She called several times , but the dog gave no sign of wanting to go. Instead, he went into Yer's bedroom and crawled under the bed.

Even though Yer pleaded with the dog and threatened him with a stick, he would not come out from under the bed. So she had to reach back and pull him out with her hands, and then carry him bodily out of the house.

But the dog ran back inside again, and crawled under Yao's bed. Again, (she) ... pulled the dog outside, but again the dog ran back inside ... . This happened several times ... finally Yer said, " ... we will have to stay another day, and continue on our way tomorrow ... ."

But the next morning, the dog did exactly the same thing. Yer beat him with a switch, but still he would not leave. Then she remembered what her father had told her: if the dog chose to stay with anyone, even another dog, she must spend the rest of her life there. The dog was her guide.

... The king's daughter cried and cried. ... she said, "Dear Yao, I must live with you for my father told me to follow my dog to whatever place he refused to leave, and to marry the man I would find there. My dog has stopped in your house, so I must stay with you forever."

Yao objected, saying that he was too poor for a king's daughter. But Yer insisted. ... At last Yer agreed, and the two were married. But Yer was sad and sometimes cried the whole day long. Often her face streamed with tears. ... Yao would say to her, "I told you I could not marry you, but you insisted. So now, why do you cry so much? What are we going to do?"

... Later on Yao and Yer had a baby boy. When the baby was able to sit alone, Yer said, "Yao, let's go and visit my parents. I think about them very much."

So they left with the horse and the red eyed dog. They walked for a long time. When they came within sight of the white columns of the palace, Yer said to her husband, "Yao, you take the rope now and lead the horse. When we get to the house, tie the horse to the middle column. While we are here visiting, my parents will kill a pig for a feast, and when we are ready to leave, my father will want to give us a gift. He will ask you what

you would like. Do not ask for meat or rice. When he offers you silver or gold, say to him, 'I want neither silver nor gold for these two mean only tears in the world of men.' When he offers you horses, say, 'No, horses only bring unhappiness to men.' When he offers you buffaloes or oxen, say, 'These only bring sorrow.' But say,'Please, if it is possible, I would like to have your round piece of iron, your dry gourd, and your old scrap of buffalo hide, for they will help us live.' "

Soon they arrived in the courtyard of the parents' home. Yao tied the horse to the middle column as Yer had told him to do. The king ... yelled out, " Who dares to tie up his horse to my center column? I will eat him for dinner, and wash him down with wine.

When Yao heard this, he trembled and his heart pounded faster and faster. But Yer said, "Father, do not scold us. it is only Yer, your daughter, come back to visit you."

On hearing these words, the king smiled broadly, came out, and welcomed Yao, Yer and their child. After a few days ... the parents ... offered a big feast for Yao and his family ... and then asked them what they would like for a gift.

Since Yer had already taught Yao the answers ... Yao said, " ... I ask only your round piece of iron, your dry gourd, and your scrap of buffalo hide for these can help us live."

"Oh my dear children," said the king, " I depend on these for my own life each day. If I give them to you, how shall I live?"

Yer went to her father and cried as she scolded him, "Father, I obeyed you when all your other daughters refused. I went to a miserable house, with no food, and where I had only worn-out rags for clothes. Why do you not give us what we ask?"

The king thought a moment and said, "Very well, my daughter. It is true that you obeyed me when all your sisters refused. Since you are unhappy, I will give you all these marvelous things to help you live well."

The next morning, the young family ... set out on their long journey back home. ... Yao was annoyed by the heavy load and began to complain, "Why didn't we ask for meat and rice? Or horses and buffaloes? These things he gave us are no good. This iron is heavy. This dry gourd is too big and too fragile. The scrap of buffalo hide is tattered and worthless. Carrying them is too much bother." So he threw them into a ditch and lay down to sleep, exhausted and hungry.

When he awoke beside the road where he had thrown the iron, the gourd and the buffalo hide, Yao and Yer found steaming bowls of rice, beef, chicken, and pork, all cooked and ready to eat. A young servant appeared and said, " Take and eat this meal before going on, Oh Mother and Father."

Yao told Yer not to touch the food because they had no money to pay for such a meal. But Yer said, "Yes, let's eat. This is a meal, prepared just for us. We'll eat and then go." And this marvel continued each day of the return trip.

When Yao and Yer got home, the magic objects produced a beautiful house for them with servants to do the work.

Everyday the servants went to work in the fields. Some built dikes, and dug little canals, and others cultivated the soil. They prepared large rice fields for Yao and Yer.

From that time on, Yao and Yer lived a life of ease. They became rich and owned everything they ever needed. They lived happily ever after.

Dee Lee
Laos

The Love

Friendship is constant
In all other things
Save in office
And affairs of love.

All heart and love
Use their own tongue,
And let every eye
Negotiate for itself.
And trust no agent.
But beauty is a witch
And melts into blood.

Fareed O. Ibrahim
Congo

Dreaming Love

Eyes are lost dreaming
For you my love. You know
Not my heart is ablaze.
My heart desire.
My heart throbbing.

The rivers are flowing,
And trees are vernal.
Life will be impossible
Without you.
May I ever nestle
Within your arms.
Life will never run dry
Since dry earth harms.

Fareed O. Ibrahim
Congo

The Mesh

We have come to the crossroads,
And I must either choose or come
with you.
I lingered over the choice.
But in the darkness of my doubts
You lifted the lamp of love.
And I saw in your face
The road that I should take.

Alexander Woode
Ghana

A Significant Moment

Everyday, something happens to us. Sometimes it is good and we are glad; but, sometimes it is bad and we are worried about it. The future is unknown to us, so we do not know what is going to happen to us. Of course, we would be glad to know our future; many bad occurrences would not happen then in our lives, but it is not possible now.

The best moment in my life happened when I arrived in America. When I flew over American territory, it was unbelievable. When the plane was over New York City, it was evening. I could not believe I was seeing the Statue of Liberty and the lights of New York City. It was a shock for me. I could not even sleep that night.

On the next day, my relatives showed us a part of New York City. Then we left for Syracuse. Of course, after such a big city as New York, Syracuse did not seem as big a city to me. But I had to live in Syracuse, and I started to like it.

My second day in America was also interesting. I met all my relatives whom I had never seen. It was wonderful. Every one of us was happy. ... members of a big family were together again. These moments are in my memory and always will be. People never forget pleasant moments in their lives; people try to forget the bad moments.

Yaroslav Leshchishin
Ukraine

Letter to My Coach

Dear Colleen,

I just wanted to say I really enjoyed playing Volleyball. We might not have won a lot of games, but we played hard and tough. What really counts is that we had fun. Those times when I would crack up laughing. It wasn't you. I was being weird!

I just want you to know that you are a really good coach. I wish that I wasn't a senior, but I am. I'll let you know when I have a game up in Cazenovia. ... Always remember the bullet, the secret weapon. I'm glad I decided to play Volleyball. But I'll miss you next year.

I hope your future with your boyfriend goes like you want it to go. I had a good season. Now no more waking up on Saturday mornings. Good luck with Volleyball next year. C-YA.

Carmen Mcmahon
Chile

The Ideal Roommate

There is no ideal (room) mate as there is no ideal person or society. But probably everyone dreams about perfect living in an excellent environment and being in harmony with a roommate. In my opinion, the ideal roommate is a person whom I really get along with and whom I have a lot of things in common with. To be on the same level in society with the person is also very important for me; otherwise, a lot of arguments and misunderstandings can occur which can't be smoothed over by the roommate's honesty, responsibility, reliability and kindness. ... Having an ideal roommate also depends on people's age. For older people, it might take more time to get used to each other's personalities because each of them has already formed his own way of life. Young people would find more common interests, and get closer faster. Sometimes people don't have a choice, as for example, in the military service. ... The crucial factor ... is having a good personality yourself, and being able to get along with anyone.

Anonymous (1)

Impressions of a New Arrival

When I arrived in the United States, I received some help from the Ukrainian Church pastor and his family. (They) spoke Ukrainian even though they were born in the United States. ... Next morning ... after breakfast, I went outside for a walk. I was very lonely. I didn't see anybody outside. I thought that the people were dead. Then the pastor's wife told me that most people have their own cars, and they use them always.

... the pastor's son and I went to the mall. I asked him, "How come you are driving? □you are still young. " He said, " Whoever is sixteen years old can drive." ... When we came to the mall, it was a very big place ... a lot of little stores ... a lot of people ... sitting on benches, walking around, and eating ... food. ... I found out that people go to the mall for spending ... time, even though they don't shop at all. ... there is a big selection of items ... employees were very polite ... asked how they can help me.

... I ordered a banana split. ... it was high. I didn't know where to start. I never ate so much ice cream. At the end of the day, I was tired. I saw a lot of new things. Also, I was very thankful to the pastor's family that they were very nice to me.

Anonymous (2)

My Favorite Place

I would like to describe my favorite place. It is St. Andrew's church, one of the fifty churches of my native city, Kiev. It is not big, but it is a very beautiful church, inside and outside. The church was built between 1749-1762. The man who planned the construction and painted the pictures was an Italian named Rustrelli. But this church was built by Russians, Ukrainians, and foreign craftsmen.

I didn't live close to the church, but could see it from my apartment. I liked to look at it in the evening or at night. Around the church, were about four or five big lights that shone on the church. When it was dark and the lights were turned on, it was just beautiful because it was a little bit higher and brighter than other places. During the day, it looks like an old beautiful castle.

If you would like to see the church closer and inside, you need to go upstairs, up the big wood steps that lead to the church. There is a small area around the church for people who like to look at the city (Kiev) from this place. Inside the church, you can see many beautiful pictures in the summer as well as in the winter. These do not change anytime. It is very difficult to describe these pictures to you. You need to look at them to see how excellent they are. Some of them are big and some of them are smaller, but every one is the only one in the world. All the pictures have beautiful frames made of alabaster and then gilded. There are also paintings in the vault of the Cupola.

Unfortunately now, this church looks like a museum, but some other churches have services. Thousands of Soviet and foreign tourists visit St. Andrew's Church every year.

Igor Bloshkin

Ukraine

Learning New Things

The memory is still in my mind. When I had just come to the United States, I found that using the equipment in my house was very difficult because we did not have that kind of equipment in Vietnam. The bathtub was the biggest problem for me.

The first morning (when) I went to take a bath, my mother asked ... if I knew how to use a bathtub. ... I said to my mother, "Using a bathtub is too easy." I thought I knew what I was doing. ... I turned on the water and let it flow into the bathtub until it was full of water. ... I stood outside of the bathtub and poured water on to my body. The water was all over the floor and I did not know what to do.

Eventually, my sponsor who lives downstairs ... came up to my Mom and asked, " What are you doing? All the water has seeped down to my house and has gotten everything wet."

She came up to my Mom with an angry face and spoke in a disrespectful way. ... I bet that my Mom didn't understand a word ... because my Mom didn't know how to speak English.

Nhon Pham
Vietnam

My Future

My professional goal is to be a very good registered nurse. Since I was a young girl, I have always wanted to be a nurse. ... because I like to help people. Now that I have the opportunity ... I will do my best to fulfill it. Onondaga community college has given me the opportunity to succeed ... . It is now my turn to prove to myself that I can do it.

After I am done with nursing (school) and I have been working a couple of years, I would like to attend a four year college for Nursing Administration. Then my professional goal will be complete, and I will work until retirement day.

Nelda Ortiz
Puerto Rico

Stranger at Home

(Excerpt from a journal entry)

I close my eyes and see our big grey house, children running on the street, big tall trees, the smell of national Uzbek food. My great-grandmother looks out from the window and calls me home to eat. I remember my old home by the way it felt on my skin. But I always wonder if I went back after having been away from home for a time, would I find myself feeling alienated.

There are still going to be the house, the trees, and the streets, but everything that I remember and expected to see would have changed. Nobody can return to things as they were before. It seems to be that Thomas Wolfe was right when he called one of his novels: You Can't Go Home Again.

But Hemingway's hero did. In his story , "Soldier's Home." ... about a soldier who was disoriented after coming back from World War I. ... The author used his code " grace under pressure" and put his character in a difficult situation. ... Krebs returned .... physically ill and totally alienated from his past life. It was not home for him anymore. People "lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds." ... Krebs could not find a connection with his family and town.

... People in town thought " he came home too late, years after the war was over." Even though the war was over only six or eight months ago, for everyone it seemed to be a long time. ... "all the atrocity stories were told. " His mother's attention "always wandered," and his father " was noncommittal." In order to be listened to "he had to lie. " Krebs represents one of the members of the "lost generation." ... the world the townspeople were in "was not the world he was in."

... All Krebs dialogues helps us to understand that he has drifted far from ambition and sentimental talk. ... he wanted " his life to go smoothly, " but life continues to go on even if you have gone through the disaster of war, and you can still feel the pain of the war wounds in your heart.

(In conclusion) T.S. Eliot says that the great writer reflects his time – not only the appearances of his time, but also the spiritual meaning of the events he renders.

Elina Petrillo
Uzbek

How I Got to Typing School

When I was a small boy, I used to go play in downtown Asmara. Accidentally, I saw the typing school which was near the playground. I always looked through the big glass windows, and saw the people typing. I always dreamed to do the same thing because I thought it was some kind of game.

When I told my parents about it, they did not understand me. So I took my father and I showed him the place. He told me that it was not any kind of game. He started to explain to me that it was a typing school. I didn't care what he was saying. I wanted to go in to try it. I kept on asking him and crying.

Sometimes I used my mother to help me. ...She discussed it with him. In the end, he agreed to take me. After about six months of playing (at typing), I realized how books were written. Then I became serious about it. Every three months when my school closed, I forced my father to take me to the typing school which was very expensive at that time.

Osman Ahmed
Ethiopia

It's Not Fair!

"It's not fair!" I often hear Americans saying these words since I came to the land of liberty. ... my ... impression ... people want to be treated fairly ... because Americans think all men are created equal. Unfairness is not acceptable in this country. ... it can be a very sad experience ... for someone new to this country.

... five years ago ... I was culturally unknowledgeable. ... I borrowed three tapes from the downtown library. The expiration day was Saturday. I walked 20 minutes ... to the downtown library. ... I was pregnant, and hard for me. But the library was closed because the day was a holiday. ...we could not drop the tapes in the after hour box. ... on Monday, the library charged me $8.oo for overdue fines for the tapes.

I complained and tried to argue with them. ... maybe I explained ... unclearly, but they insisted on charging me. The $8.00 was not only an unplanned expenditure, but also presented an unfair event. I refused to pay the money. ... there was no place to fight the injustice.

However, I unwillingly paid the $8.00 because I had to use my card to borrow books from the OCC (library). I told the story to a branch librarian. He advised me to argue with the downtown library. ... now, I really have no time to argue with anybody who is an unreasonable person. I don't like to spend my valuable time arguing over $8.00. What I really want is to be treated fairly next time.

Jianping Chen
China

Playing Soccer

When I was a little boy,
I liked to play soccer.
I played with my friend.
It was so exciting to me.

When I was in school,
I played soccer everyday.
If school was closed,
I played with my neighbors.

As I was growing up,
I became a soccer player.
I needed to practice
To become a good player.

Tan Ho
Vietnam

The Punic Wars

(These are) three wars between Rome and Carthage in which Rome became the leading power in the western Mediterranean. Early relations had been friendly, but the Carthaginian occupation of Sicily ... threatened the trade and security of Rome's allies, the Greek cities of southern Italy.

Rome's intervention to help Messina, led to the 1st Punic War (264-241 B.C.). The Romans built a fleet to challenge the naval strength of Carthage, and reduced Sicily to a roman province. (Next) the Carthaginians, under Hamilcar and Hannibal, conquered Spain. ... Hannibal's attack on Sarguntum, a Roman ally in Spain, led to the 2nd Punic War (218-201 B.C.). Hannibal crossed ... the Alps into Italy and defeated the Romans at Trasimene and Cannae. ... deprived of the help of Hasdrubal who was defeated and killed ... Hannibal was recalled.

(The Roman) Scipio Africanus had driven the Carthaginians from Spain (206 B.C.) and invaded Africa. After his defeat by Scipio at Zama, Hannibal advised acceptance of the harsh Roman terms of peace. Carthage nevertheless made a quick economic recovery. On the pretext of a Carthaginian attack on one of Rome's allies, Rome opened the 3rd Punic War (149-146 B.C.), as Cato the Elder had long urged should be done.

Ehab F. Altajialfarouqi
Palestine

My Fears

I came to America from India on May 11, 1993. I had not been to school in over 15 years. Coming to OCC to educate myself was my worst fear. I was afraid I would not be able to make any friends. I did not know how the teachers would be, and how well I would be able to understand them.

I still remember my first day of class. When I entered the classroom, I saw many American students. I was so afraid that I almost fainted. No one said "hi" to me. I went into the corner and sat down. When the instructor came, she started the class, but I did not hear anything she said. I was sweating in the cold weather without a coat on me. My heart was beating 100 miles an hour. I did not know what was happening around me. After class, I went to the bathroom and splashed water on my face to wake up from the nightmare. When I went to my second class, I felt better because there were fewer students. Some of the students said hello to me. It was then that I felt a little better.

I've been coming to OCC since January 1994. I find it very hard to make friends, especially with American students. No one talks much. Even if they speak to me, the next time I meet them I am a total stranger. Understanding American culture and language is hard because everyone speaks slang words.

I wish the American students would come up and talk to me because I am a stranger here. It is very hard for me to approach them because I am in their territory. If they did talk to me and made friends with international students, they could learn about other cultures. For me, I want to know more about American culture, but I am afraid to approach an American student.

I must say the instructors here are very understanding and they teach very nicely. They really work hard with the students.

Louiza D'Souza
India

A Summer Festival in Japan

Summer is the season of festivals in Japan. Among all of them, the Tenjin Festival is the best for me. ... It is a gorgeous summer event and is observed on July 24 and 25 every year. The festival started more than 1,000 years ago, so it's a historical and traditional celebration. Many Osaka residents love it because it is a familiar festival for them since childhood. It is held at Temmangu shrine, and has lots of display tents on the road and river, and fabulous fireworks.

From the main street to the Shrine, there are many display tents on both sides. Japanese roads are very narrow compared with American roads, and they are crowded with ... tents and worshipers. ... In some, insects are sold for very high prices as kids pets. My hometown, Osaka, does not have forage for insects to live on, so the city children find the insects a great curiosity. A beetle is a popular insect to sell at those tents. Sometimes it costs more than $100. for a rare species. Some sellers demonstrate and sell items such as cotton candy, cold drinks, corn, toys, and so on. There are game tents too. The scooping goldfish game is fun for everybody. In this game, people use a spoon made from paper and wire to try to pick up goldfish until the paper tears. I am good at this game and always bring some goldfish to my home.

In the afternoon of the following day, the religious procession, which is the main event of the festival, occurs. From Temmangu Shrine, the long parade of portable shrines, ox carts, and drums and flutes goes onto the main street. During the parade, they play music which sounds " conchiki-chin, conchiki-chin." This sound makes me feel excited. It is the traditional Japanese festival music.

There is a river next to the Temmangu Shrine. The festival enters its second stage when the parade moves out on to the river. When the sky becomes dark, there are over a hundred torch light boats parading up and down the river. At night, maybe after 9 o'clock, the fireworks start. There are several hundred fireworks. It is very beautiful to see the gorgeous fireworks display in the dark sky. When they explode in the sky with the noise, we shout, "Tamaya!" There is no meaning for Tamaya. After the fireworks are finished, my neck is stiff because I have looked up ... for a long time, and I have a sore throat because I have shouted a lot. It is very difficult to find a good place to see these fireworks because there are many high-rise buildings around the Shrine. We can also see this festival on television because a TV station does a live relay.

These two days I feel peaceful and I become a child again ... . I missed the Tenjin Festival these past two years. That is why I felt something missing during the summer.

Etsuko Kijima
Japan

My Twin Cousins

My cousins, Ming and Geng, are twins. They look very similar. Both of them have well-chiseled features: high foreheads, heavy eyebrows, and square chins. The color of the jackets they wear is always the same. The hair style they keep is very short but neat. Because they are as alike as two peas, people often mistake one for the other.

Even though their appearances are alike, their personalities are very different. Once people become familiar with them, they will be surprised by these differences.

Ming is an open-minded young man. He likes associating with friends, and he never misses any party or gathering of friends. When together with friends, he is always very active. In many cases, people can hear his voice before seeing him.

Geng has an opposite personality; Geng doesn't like noisy situations. People can often find him just sitting in his room, reading books or pondering something. At social gatherings or parties, Geng usually is an audience and seldom expresses his opinion when his friends are arguing with each other.

Their behavior is also very different. Ming's movements are quick. Whenever he has an idea, he will do it as soon as possible. Ming is a creative person, but never careful. In the last year, he lost three bunches of keys, and six times left his umbrellas at bus stations.

When they were pupils, every day my aunt exhorted Ming to be careful, but Geng was seldom worried. Geng is always attentive to every tiny thing. Before doing something, he prefers thinking about it again and again. His friends complain, " Anyone who wants to make friends with Geng should be very patient. "

Some people are amazed at the differences between my cousins. But my aunt is proud of these differences. She often says, " I know Ming isn't a perfect boy, and neither is Geng. But if I could combine their merits together, surely, I would have a perfect child! "

Fei Zheng
China

Altruistic Behavior in Society Today

Altruism is characterized as the behavior of a person or a group ... that is ready to sacrifice ... interests, benefits, and sometimes even life for the goodness of others ... . Altruism is not exclusively a human trait. ... There are a lot of highly organized animals that ... protect their children. For example, birds pretend to be wounded or sick in order to lead predators away from their nests. Researchers of the animal world ... observed numerous times how two elephants supported a third one who was wounded or sick, helping him to move. When the mother dies in a group of monkeys, there will always be another female that will feed and nurture the young one.

... this history of the development of human society is many-sided. It includes altruism and selfishness, kindness and cruelty, betrayal and self-sacrifice. Examples of human altruism from ancient to present times are preserved in people's memory.

People remember ... doctors who inoculated themselves with disease ... to find treatment for it . and the hiding of Jewish people from the Nazis in world War II. The act of giving up one's life for others or for ideas was very common in that time. ... Examples include the Kamikaze pilots of World War II, the self-immolation of the protesting monks in Vietnam, (and) the deaths by starvation of IRA prisoners in Northern Ireland.

... There are many factors that affect the strong development of altruistic behavior in society. One ... is in the upbringing of children. ... children (can) learn to love others, to sympathize with the unfortunate and the suffering, and to love animals (from) the environment. One of the most important environments ... is a family. ... a Russian magazine, "Family and School, ... showed that 70 5 of children who lived in orphanages while their parents were alive, came from families where parents themselves grew up in orphanages. ... people who don't see parental altruism in their childhood most probably will not be able to display altruism toward their children.

(Other influences toward altruism) ... TV, ... belief in God, ... church membership, ... organizations such as Red Cross, Salvation Army ... other social and charitable organizations. ... For altruism to grow and flourish, it must be rewarded by society and popularized by mass media.

... (There is) ... a growing interest in altruistic behavior ... especially among teenagers. A nationally representative survey of American school children showed that children aged ten to fourteen care, more than their parents did, about improving society and the world than about a better lifestyle for themselves. ... over 60 % of the children were ready to give up their allowances in order to feed hungry children in developing countries. Two-thirds of the children are already involved in some kind of communal activity. ... nine out of ten were ready to (do) more.

Janna Sereda
Ukraine

Tiger Hill in Suzhou

Suzhou is a beautiful ancient city in Southern China. It is also called the Venice of the East. There are many famous places in Suzhou. The best of them might be Tiger Hill, a garden built on a beautiful hill which looks like a giant drunken tiger lying at the bank of the Suzhou river just five miles from downtown Suzhou. It has fascinating landscapes, a unique tea-house and interesting people.

... The colorful hill has many small gardens hidden in the ancient forest. Each ... has its unique design. ... the Chinese people excel in the landscaping of enchantingly beautiful gardens. along the stone-paved trail, there are strange looking rocks, nicely shaped ponds, uniquely structured stone bridges, and rare trees and special flowers.

There are some colorful shrines which are decorated with exquisite sculptures on Tiger Hill. The roofs of these shrines are of particular interest. Most of them are adorned with representations of two mythical creatures – the dragon and the phoenix. there are a couple of pagodas on the peak of the hill. They are built as resting places for the souls of good people in the other world.

Another interesting place near Tiger Hill is the tea-house. This teahouse is an ordinary drinking place. It is located by the river at the foot of the hill. There are many bamboo trees surrounding the tea-house. The elegant cherry furniture reflects the ancient culture. The teapots and the teacups are made of dark copper-colored pottery. They are very small. The Chinese believe that the smaller the teapots, the better the tea.

The waitresses, who wear the Chinese traditional dresses called *chipo*, are very pretty and friendly. They place the teapot in a bowl and fill the teapot with boiling water, part of which is then poured into the cups to warm them. The cups and the remaining water in the teapot are then emptied. The waitress serves the tea to the customers by using the tea tray. The tea drinkers enjoy this tea-house because it has many kinds of tea, such as black, green and oolong. The tea-house (serves) *dim sum* as well, Chinese snacks such as steamed dumplings, fried egg rolls, and Chinese beef pies. After a wonderful day of adventure on tiger Hill, people always stop at the tea-house.

Tiger Hill takes on the surreal beauty of some fairy dwelling. The beauty of tiger Hill attracts many people from all over the world. They look different ... they speak different languages ... wear different styles of clothing, but they all come here to enjoy themselves. some are here for the sightseeing; some are here just for the serenity; some are here to seek inspiration.

Chaomei Jing
China

How to Buy a Used Car

Many people buy used cars ... because they cannot afford a new car. ... the biggest buyers of used cars are young buyers. ... they must recognize that there are a lot of chances to lose their money. They have to be aware ... of fraud.

... So in order to buy a used car in good condition give the car to a mechanic for checking or do this yourself. ... be aware of – Has the car been in an accident? Is the engine in good condition? Is the body in good condition?

... to check if the car has been in an accident ... check for proper alignment of the tires ... check for gaps between the hood and the two fenders ... gaps very large or very small means that the car was involved in an accident.

... check the engine ... If the car has high mileage or the car is very old, the engine usually is in bad condition. ... If you hear noise from the engine, ... something is wrong with it.... important that the engine is clean ... when the engine is dirty ... there is leaking somewhere.

... (check) the condition of the body and paint. Many cars in New York State have rusted bodies. If the car has a lot of rust, it means that you will tow your car to the junk yard (soon). Rust increases very quickly. ... even a small spot of rust is very dangerous to the body. ... check the paint on the car because having a car repainted is very expensive.

Sometimes people buy a used car for a low price and still drive the car for a long period of time. Other people spend lots of money and (soon) the car breaks down. ... You cannot predict the future for you car, but if you will follow some specific rules, it will increase the probability that your car will serve you better.

Victor Kuts
Ukraine

Amanda
(A Characterization from The Glass Menagerie)

The Glass Menagerie is a play written by Tennessee Williams in 1945. The play is about the Wingfield's Family's disintegration. Amanda (the mother) is the focal point of the play, and her wishes, character, and actions initiate and carry the play forward.

... As well as having conflicts with her children, Amanda also confronts conflicts internally which is one of her personality flaws. Amanda cherishes her memories (of) the South, and she always talks about her past in Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers. Among her callers " were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta – planters and sons of planters. "

... Amanda is a rigid and inflexible person. She pays " hawklike attention " to Tom's eating style and gives him " constant direction on how to eat " ... She remains in the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution), an organization of which " the members must document that they have ancestors who served the patriots cause in the Revolutionary War, " in order to have a sense of loftiness and to commemorate her ancestors.

... Although Amanda has her own personality flaws, there is still much to admire in her. She has endurance, capability, and tenderness. Amanda's husband left her a long time ago, and she had to raise her children all on her own. She faces " lonely struggles in an emotionally and financially starved condition. " She has a lot of " Spartan endurance, " and her life is not easy. She had " put up a solitary battle all these years. " Moreover, Amanda is capable. She is " a woman of action as well as words. "

Although it can be argued that Laura (the daughter) is the main character in this play because she is the one who changes a lot from beginning to end, Amanda is the focal point of the play. She acts as an "engine " in the play and initiates a lot of actions in it. Actions taken by Laura and Tom (the son) are ordered by Amanda. ... they both take a passive place in the play. ... Amanda's ... actions carry the play forward.

... Amanda's attitude towards her children changes. At the end of the play, she begins to accept Laura's incapability ... she also lets Tom leave the family. This character, Amanda, helps the audience to understand a woman in her situation and loneliness. Although Amanda appears to be foolish in some situations, she is by all means a loving and caring mother.

Vivian Lee
China